

2003 Severe Weather Summary

Extreme east central and northeast Kansas
National Weather Service Kansas City, MO

The 2003 severe weather season started out rapidly and became one of the most intense recorded in almost 26 years. A total of six tornadoes touched down in far northeast and east central Kansas, including one violent (F4) tornado which tore through Wyandotte County. Two fatalities were reported with this tornado.

The weather season began with a relatively mild and dry winter. Below normal snowfall totals contributed to the long standing drought which has plagued the region since late 2001. Winter weather conditions did affect portions of Linn County on January 9th, and much of Leavenworth, Wyandotte, Atchison and Johnson Counties on the 15th. A fast moving storm also brought 5 to 6 inches of snow across Linn County on February 23rd.

After a slow March with just a handful of hail reports on the 12th, the severe weather season kicked off in earnest in April. Large hail plagued much of the region on the 19th, 24th, and 30th. The first tornado of the season touched down briefly near Hillsdale Lake in Miami County on the 24th. Hail up to quarter size fell on the 30th in Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte Counties.

May roared in with a vengeance, with numerous severe weather systems all compressed into the week from May 4th to May 10th. A total of 37 severe weather events were noted during this week across far northeast and east central Kansas, including six tornadoes which touched down in east central and northeast Kansas the afternoon of May 4th. Two tornadoes struck Leavenworth County. The strongest was in the southern part of the county south of Tonganoxie, where F2 damage was noted. This tornado produced around \$4 million in damage before dissipating and reforming further east into Wyandotte County. The tornado in Wyandotte County was the strongest of the season. It produced F4 damage in two locations within Kansas City, Kansas. Two deaths were attributed to the tornado. These were the first tornado related fatalities in far northeast and east central Kansas since the Leavenworth County tornado of June 8th, 1966. It was also the first F4 or greater tornado recorded in Wyandotte County since May 7th, 1961. Total damage in Wyandotte County was around \$16 million. A tornado also touched down in southeast Miami County near New Lancaster. This tornado moved across open country before crossing into Missouri.

May 8th brought another round of extreme weather to the region. A strong tornado, rated F2 on the Fujita damage scale, crossed into Linn County. The tornado moved through open country between Mound City and Centerville, where it struck a cemetery. Baseball size hail also fell near Gardner during the evening commute through Johnson County. A few wind reports on May 10th capped off a very busy May for severe weather.

The remainder of the summer was characterized primarily by excessive heat and drought. Sporadic thunderstorms brought hail and damaging winds at times through June, July and much of August. A thunderstorm brought heavy rain which produced brief flash flooding to Leavenworth County on June 12th. A complex of thunderstorms brought tremendous amounts of

rain to east central Kansas over the Labor Day weekend. Rainfall totals of 10 to 11 inches were noted across Johnson County, where a young man drowned after getting caught in the raging waters of Indian Creek.

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